

# Bard

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# Bard

ON THE PORCH OF LAW:  
FIRST MORNING SESSION

1.  
this is not nowhere  
or is not Japan

Galactic rumors  
find me find me

the esurient also will I impleve,  
the shouldered low will I lift up

until the broken daylight  
mends

it harrows me,  
this lithe between.

A woman.  
Is there a remedy.  
A republic.

2.  
Notary, is there a remedy  
for all the obsessions  
Love wounds me with,

was I not a child  
abused by Love's sly fingers,  
by her glances roused,  
worked over by the sight of them flaunting it  
agitated by every breeze,  
shes, trees, hes, clouds,  
battlements?

Did I not gnaw the given bone?

Why does your law, maître, leave without remedy

this battered cordial creature this wounded Eye

for whom these daily! goldfinches turn  
brighter every quick reminder?

I say I am a one corrupted by desires  
not every one of them my own,  
I say I am impelled by images—  
are not the image-mongers liable,

those masters of must-see? I appear  
as a plaintiff  
in the court  
of the galaxy  
short-winded  
despairing  
yet demanding  
the retributions  
of cosmic jurisprudence.

For every one is abused by insolent images.

3.

*And often the images have hands and loins and arms.*

And after all the sparrows you suppose  
are eagles adequate  
to rape and savage  
the quiet mind,

the easter feeling the slow  
roll of mind to know itself  
untethered by sense-objects

plausibly arrayed as a parkland of desires.  
Each age discovers nothing  
but to turn

one more way  
away from mind  
into the vague consolations of impermanence.

16 April 1993

## THE ARGUMENT FROM FELICITY

that we are sometimes happy, that  
there are weekends when the teeth don't ache  
and blizzards do not paralyze

is the worst kind of evidence.  
Sunshine distracts us from the dark.  
The logic of the situation is infernal—

whereas in torment there is a dream of change.

16 April 1993

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Castaway in the thought of rain  
the convertible swerves across the brain  
into the sleek black caverns of 1947  
a dream tears all the way up the seam

16 April 1993

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Though I did what I could  
the night came down  
and left dawn visible, much birded,  
a little breezy, the woman gone.

Born and die alone. The mind  
alone endures experience.  
Nothing but this feeling  
and feeling's nothing. The spaces  
that make sense of words,

some spiceberry bushes by the tracks  
as if time had never ended.

17 April 1993

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No ground for the permission  
he had lived as a hermit  
till the red stripes down his cloak were the color of  
speckles on a trout's flank zipping down the Sawkill  
past the murderers in baggy pants with their rods.  
This week, this April, the killing time.  
There are pale pale changes of things to meet the quieting mind  
he hoped, he wanted life to last into knowing  
and knowing quiet all things into quiet sense.  
That is why one stays alone on the low hillside  
gradully learning to talk back to the crows.

18 April 1993



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Sympathy of ravens. One. Then another one. The strut  
of prophecy, the strut of him. The kindness to endure

on ruffian abandoned offal, the supremacy of black.

That opera. I have heard you from the blue of sleep  
soar into sentences I thought my throat was speaking.

19 April 1993

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The egregious dispositions of a scroll  
crawling with instructions from the wise  
to the wise, shabby with imperatives, short  
is not a virtue in these days, o Lord of Gerizim  
one asks in vain among dove-merchants  
for a blush-breasted whiteling that might  
on a cool spring morning fly to you  
in your gold house in faraway. The scroll  
unrolls down my arms, tickles my elbow  
as I make shift to read the rickety old  
Samatitan characters, this is better  
than Bible, this is heresy with pale thighs  
and white-faced heifers at their food.  
I stand up now and put you to sleep with it,  
we snore together in the picturesque  
shadowy inwards of the house of prayer,  
I with my eyes open, you turned inward  
to all your wives and husbands and that  
sort of relationship. I am alone with God,  
the purest language, the productive silence,  
breeze in the hairs on the back of my hands.

24 October, 2016

HUECO:  
THE DAY 8-BIRD IN A WATER BIRD YEAR

1.

The day 8-bird in a Water Bird year  
reminds us of cat-tail grasses in the marshes  
where somebody was born

— *this* is my nature  
this mysterious and innocent proliferation  
between the owned land and the impartial beauty of,  
the sea.

Birds measure and declare you never  
heard so many certainties so anxiously voiced,  
joyous, scared, like Baptists at prayer.

2.

America is too big for just one calendar.  
All these blue flowers on our lawn, just these  
need Attica and Corinth and a pinch of Lydia  
to say their whens: "I blossom when the solid  
is full of sudden, I answer water, I carry the dark story  
into meek sunlight where they bend to touch me  
and the earth I come from rushes up to take them  
home into the fatherly kingdoms of space,  
glad victims you are of such bosses, alas,  
I have only a blue week or two to tell you  
all family is contrivance, trap, alliance, sleep."

3.

Discourse like that — mythy, hushed with awe  
at its own soft lips a little dry with telling —  
how can we ever get enough calendars, daffodils,  
blue-eyed grass, gold finches on grey branches,  
squirrels in their business suits among this glory,  
needing, so many numbers needing, namedays  
and saint's days and star reckonings

to know the time by any other name than now.

4.

Too big for numbers and Latin names,  
America is a vow waiting to be taken,  
taken and kept, prayer-flags on the hill,  
semis snooze by hard along 9G,  
sun's stuck in the sticks of maples, maybe,  
or sycamores, anywhere, bag of suet  
and a fallen barn, this medicine of mine.  
So new we are,

5.

so many signs.  
Where did I lose you  
who ruled so pale  
over my dingy mind?  
So many signs.  
Am I the sinner  
who took the IRT  
to the office every  
morning hat on my head  
and a key in my hand?  
Am I the winter?  
I own things now  
and there are many gods.  
Sundances, vespers,  
trances, a house  
burning on the plains  
trapping the dubious  
integers of love. Count me,  
I am American,  
I am made of numbers,  
I have loved the world  
this body tells me  
till I imagined it *the* world  
where *you* are  
with your birds and phosphorus

your credit cards and truth.  
America is too big for truth,  
the calendar is every bird,  
feet shuffling in scree,  
a woman coming home  
with an armful of scrolls,  
imported calendars,  
how can they work here?

6.

Opportunities to forget.  
Nightmares.  
I look up Waco in the dictionary, find  
“hollow, empty, vain,  
empty-headed, resonant, inflated

soft, spongy” the way ground is  
or wool, heaped oily smelly  
all over the ground  
slumped from the shearer's hands,

and also a “hole or hollow,  
gap or void,” it's a break  
in the action, a “notch or nick of a wheel” or  
gear turning or still,

an “interval of time or space;  
vacancy.”

It is emptiness.

Not far down the page is *huevo*, “egg,” the shell  
left empty when the bird of the day  
(of the year) has flown away,

this shell the daylight is,  
of some preposterous Bird that lords it  
over us all day long in hot intemperate  
yellow majesty. Short-lived time,

the egg. The breed.  
And nearer still  
is *hueso*, "a bone" or "stone"  
or "core, the part  
of the limestone  
which remains unburnt in the crucible."

A bone without a name  
that doctors handle,

a stone without hope,  
a core of emptiness.

Hueco (or Waco), Texas,  
19 April 1993 the children  
in the fiery furnace  
set out to find their father.

The cameras of the universal government  
look with curiosity at the billowing black smoke.

20 April 1993

## SERMON ON LANGUAGE

This — I mean whatever comes to mind when you read *this* — is an organization — from the proto-Greek *organ-grindo*, “the music swells, the monkey dances”— dedicated to enshrining reality deep in the heart of itself. Its code name is Language, and it was invented a war or two ago — actually during the Second Gobi War, the one that ended the paleolithic — to confer on sunlight such blessings as “It is sunning,” or “The sun is raining,” or “Shine happens,” according to the by-laws of your local lodge. For individual languages — like Basque or Xhosa or Cantonese or French — are in fact created and sustained as lodges of the ancient freemasonic society of Speakers, the ones with Language on their side, the so-called humans. All other societies —and every form of society— is subsidiary to this, this elegant and persuasive artifact which self-embeds its rules and by-laws at once in every member who pays *the dues of breath* — what we call speaking. You do not have to think very long or hard to learn that all mysteries are ensconced in language and extractable from language, and that obedience to the intricacies of language in turn reveals the exact *astro-dynamic efflorescent energy of place and circumstance* we nickname Truth. The conjuncture. The lock. The habit the heart wears in the market, the song it hums in the bathroom, the text encoded in its midnight snores. Language is astrology indoors, is the moon in the bedroom and the sun in your pocket, its rules are your rules and there is hardly a rumor — though there is a rumor — of anyone

RK

**Comment [1]:** Page: 1  
from the proto-Greek *organ-grindo* “the music swells, the monkey dances.”

disobedient to its prescriptions. Timid Nietzsche and meek Blake followed its laws like lambs, and Lenin lay down with De Maistre to graze on public language. Only the one — there was one — who woke up to the *sleep of named things* ever broke the lodge law and got away with it. All the way away. Fainting, we follow.

20 April 1993



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After the rain  
the moss-covered rocks  
astonishingly green  
in pale light up  
coming out of last year's leaves.

I live, why do I live  
always so close to the line.

20 April 1993  
KTC

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When the date of anything arises  
we say your number's up  
in England it stays with the car forever  
here we turn to another page  
waiting in the antechamber keeps the count  
waiting for the red rose with silver foil  
arrayed around his petals a rose of gold  
counted over the new spring fields  
the folds the words a book is folds  
the words fall in are lost there  
found here a bird delights.  
That is it. All we have is joy.  
The rest is noise. The old lama  
from the Calcutta charnel ground  
lived eight years among burning corpses  
and learned (or always knew? how  
can we learn what we never knew?)  
to let go of everything but joy.

21 April 1993  
*for Charlotte*

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The head is too long and swarms with desires

A B E S T I A R Y

when does the door  
learn how to open?

when the shadow of sleep hits the number Nine  
it's like a hat sometimes or a little girl

an afternoon a kettle

The strange part is we know all the answers  
a dove calls a rain falls  
so many differences come out of the ground

and in our economy the leading  
commodity is *acquired inward experience*

the more the media. Every good boy deserves fun.

22 April 1993

## THE MEETING

One tries what  
one can or once  
one could  
if it matters

it will work  
as and if it does  
because of what it was  
long ago

when you were really  
you and not this  
shadow they talk through  
waiting for a word

you told them before.

22 April 1993

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Standing close to the loading dock the pioneers  
watched the furnishings vanish into coherence  
as the man talked, christ he had a voice like a boat  
and it lifted them over the waves of the actual  
into a smooth current of running ever before the wind  
or "downstream" they imagined it in layman's nautical  
while the ground broke free under them and the weather  
was. There is no place to be going to and no reason to talk.  
Philadelphia was a song in a sad fife, loss of Limerick,  
the battle of nowhere he woke from screaming every morning  
and knew it was his wife. A dog beside him.  
Beware The House. Down by the daffodils  
a woman furnishes the rockery with blue bulbs.  
Colors handle us. There is no accent on this last remark.

22 April 1993

φυλαξ και γαιας ωψ

Earth's face and that warden  
of our senses need provides  
to till our differences and from that darnel seed  
provoke a Naxos full of wheatfields  
stretching to the sea

and every kernel glut with life

23 April 1993

## THE ROUTE

Locate the moon. In its proper slot  
(a fox's eye at dawn; butter  
oozing out of toast; a pilgrim)  
it underscores the fortunes of the Wise.

Just left outside all night (mall  
decisions; banter overheard in stone;  
a toad wakes up, money changes  
hands) it leaves an iris

at the side of the house, pointing  
to heaven and busy being purple.  
But not saying a thing. Food  
is like that. It moves us to move

without discussion of the journey.  
And so the ancients  
in the books we forget to read  
called the moon *the dead man's food*.

23 April 1993

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You'll never guess who just came out of my mouth.

23 IV 93



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Good morning verity  
I know you slept all night  
slim beside us  
while in dream I wondered

counting the contours  
things take as their own—  
peaks and dales and hidden places.

We wait for our true names  
the way an April maple waits for leaves.

23 April 1993

## AND IF SHE TOUCHED HIM

One celebration of the Magdalen was not recorded. It was a time when the *Noli* fell away and her hands were at last permitted to understand how little happens. We don't know if when her hands reached out she felt nothing at all when her flesh engaged the seeming of his own, just wavered like mindless fish through the glory of his seeming body. Or whether it was just like every other time when they were people in the world together, the way everybody is and no other way to be. If it was like every other time, her skin knew the tiny ecstasy of touch, and that was that. Ecstasy of other-touch, the thing that no skin can do alone. We do not know. And in any case it all depends on what she remembered, after, when her hand fell back beside her, to the unquestioned reality —as it seemed— of her cotton dress, that felt almost rough after his smooth skin, or the mere air it had passed through to bounce gently off her thigh and come to rest. What did she remember? It may be that her memory turned to her lovingly (for the mind loves us) and says: “I am everything you remember, Mary, but do not touch me.” The memory of a touch and the memory of no touch, these two are just the same, same substance, same emptiness. A shadow speaks. What it said and what we heard, who can be clear? Touch, no touch? Ever after it lives in memory, a dangerous neighborhood of mind. She looks down at her hands now and still tries to remember. All she could be sure of, all we have, is the permission.

23 April 1993  
[finished 27 April 1993]

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That I was caught there among the revelers  
with a sad smile on my face like a rivulet  
in April making haste over soft grasses  
swept lank in the direction of its flow—  
I slept with you because you were my body  
and woke alone because you finally were not.

23 April 1993

## AFTERDEATH

this honeycake delivered to the mourners  
squeezed out of the body of the sky

death's placenta a feeling feeling  
eventually we are born again to feel

23 April 1993